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IN THE CLAIMS:

1. *(currently amended)* An arrangement for transmitting updates/alerts over a data network to a plurality of data network system users, the arrangement comprising:
a website update/alert administrator, coupled to the data network, for receiving update or alert messages from said network, said website update/alert administrator including

a database of instant messaging (IM) groups and each group including a set of members from the plurality of data network system users,

a target listing targeting of various IM groups to associate sets of IM groups with different types of updates and alerts, ~~the administrator including~~

a transmission element for sending an automated IM to each member of each targeted IM group, the automated IM including the update/alert information; and

a listing of email addresses for each member of each IM group, wherein an email version of an update/alert is sent if a member is not involved in the IM session at the time the automated IM is sent.

2. *cancelled*

3. *(currently amended)* The arrangement of claim 2 1 wherein the email version of the update/alert requests an acknowledge reply from each IM group member receiving the email version of the update/alert.

4. *(original)* The arrangement of claim 1 wherein the automated IM includes a trailer portion indicating that the IM is "automated" and "cannot be responded to".

5. *(original)* The arrangement of claim 1 wherein the automated IM includes a request for acknowledge of receipt of each IM group member to confirm that each member of the IM group has received the update/alert.

6. *(currently amended)* A method of transmitting update/alert messages over a data network to a plurality of data network system users, the method comprising the steps of:

a) receiving, at a website administrator, an update/alert message to be sent to a plurality of systems users;

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- b) using the message information, retrieving a targeted listing of IM groups to whom the update/alert message should be sent; and
- c) transmitting the update/alert message as an automated IM to each member of each targeted IM group;
- d) determining if any members of any targeted group are not involved in the IM session at the time the automated IM is sent; and, if so,
- e) retrieving the email address of each user not involved in the IM session; and
- f) transmitting an email version of the automated IM to each user not involved in the IM session.

7. *cancelled*

8. *(currently amended)* The method as defined in claim 7 6 wherein the transmitted email version includes a request for each user to transmit a confirmation reply message.

9. *(original)* The method as defined in claim 6 wherein the automated IM message transmitting in step c) includes a trailer portion indicating that the message is "automated" and "cannot be responded to".

10. *(original)* The method as defined in claim 6 wherein the automated IM message transmitted in step c) includes a request to acknowledge receipt of the message by each IM group member by transmitting a confirmation reply message to the website administrator.

11. *(original)* The method as defined in claim 10 wherein the method further comprises the step of:

- g) associating each received acknowledgement with a proper IM group member to determine which IM groups have received the update/alert and which IM group members have not received the update/alert.